



Employee Assistance Program

4514 South 67th Street • 593-1711

June 2011

Omaha Public Schools, Metro Area Transit, Papio Natural Resources District, City of Omaha, Douglas County

Health-e headlines™: A Quick Glance at the Headlines

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Unplug

Your computer, cell phone charger, video game console, and DVD player all drain electricity when not in use. A smart way to identify “phantom” drains of energy is to walk through your home with the lights off and look for those red and green lights still shining. If you don't need the electronics, unplug and turn them off, suggests MXenergy.



Kick Those Butts, But Not To The Curb

You see drivers flick cigarette butts out the car window. You find piles of butts in parking lots where drivers simply dump their car ashtrays out.



Where do all those disgusting butts go? Public roads, waterways, parks, and beaches.

Research funded by the national public health foundation Legacy shows that cigarette filters and discarded cigarette butts harm the environment. Cigarette butts contain heavy metals that can leach into waterways and pose a threat to aquatic life.

Millions of cigarette filters/butts are the number one littered item found on beaches and on streets.

According to new research, cigarette butts have potentially toxic effects on ecosystems and people:

- In a laboratory test, one cigarette butt soaked in a liter of water killed fish.
- Poison centers report that children under 6 eat cigarette butts and can get nicotine poisoning.

Cigarette filters are not biodegradable. Even under ideal conditions, cigarette butts can take years to degrade, and then only break up into small particles of plastic, toxic waste.

Bottom line: tossing a cigarette is not socially acceptable, and now we know it's not nice to the environment either. Dispose of cigarettes in trash. Or, better yet, encourage smokers to stop.

Keep Your Cool, No Sweat

The sweat experts at the International Hyperhidrosis Society debunk common myths and share the truth to help keep you cool throughout the summer.



Myth #1: Antiperspirants are for underarms only. Think outside the pits! You can glide, stick, spray, and roll-on nearly anywhere that sweating is a problem (think hands, feet, face, back, chest, and even groin). Talk to your dermatologist first.

Myth #2: Sweaty people are out-of-shape, nervous, or have hygiene issues. Our 2 to 4 million sweat glands are essential to survival. They act as the body's coolant to protect it from overheating. Athletes sweat more than other people because their bodies are so efficient at keeping cool.

Myth #3: You should ditch the stick because antiperspirants can cause breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease. The aluminum salts in antiperspirants are not the problem, say both the American Cancer Society and the Alzheimer's Association. Cut dietary salt to avoid health risks.

Myth #4: Like caffeine, antiperspirants are best used in the morning. You can use an antiperspirant in the afternoon or evening too. Sweat production is at its lowest at night, giving antiperspirants a better chance to get into pores and block daytime perspiration.

Myth #5: Surgery is the only way to stop excessive sweating. Ouch! Side effects of surgery can be worse than the original problem. For 90% of patients, post-surgery sweating on the back, chest, abdomen, legs, face, and buttocks doesn't go away. Try clinical strength antiperspirants, even Botox injections and other methods you can discuss with your doctor, before turning to surgery.

Truth: Excessive sweating is a treatable skin condition affecting 178 million people worldwide. Hyperhidrosis, or excessive sweating, is a real and recognized medical condition that causes people to sweat 4 or 5 times more than normal. But there is help. Visit www.SweatHelp.org for help, support, to find a doctor, or download information for you or that sweaty someone you love.



Baby Bookworms

It doesn't matter what you read to your baby, even *The Wall Street Journal*. Just read out loud and bond with your child.

"With reading, the benefits increase since infants are auditory learners," said Hannah Chow, MD, a pediatrician at Loyola University's Chicago School of Medicine. "By talking and reading to your baby, he or she

learns about communication and how to interact with other people."

According to Dr. Chow, reading to children at a young age also encourages a passion for books and learning, improves a child's concentration, which improves attention in school, stimulates creativity and imagination, and improves vocabulary.

Whatever you read, she said, read out loud to your newborn using voice inflection and interacting with him or her while you read. As children age, what you read becomes more important. According to Dr. Chow, infants and toddlers enjoy staring at people, especially babies, so try to find books that are colorful and simple with lots of pictures and few words.

As they become toddlers, make sure books are durable because they will get banged on the floor and chewed on.

"Most toddlers don't want to sit still while you read an entire book, so read part of the story and let him or her wander off and explore for a while and then return to the story a little later. Just be sure you make it purposeful and a part of their routine," said Dr. Chow. "Let your kids pick which book they want to read and if it's the same one over and over and over again, just keep reading it. Kids learn from repetition."

She also suggests having books with you at all times. When you have downtime, such as riding in the car or sitting in a waiting room, you have a great activity for your child. Though reading in and of itself is a wonderful habit, the most important part of the activity is the quality time it gives parents with their kids.

"If reading is a priority for you, if they see you picking up a book instead of turning on the TV, they will most likely do it too," according to Dr. Chow.



Is Your Job A Pain In The Neck?

No, really, if you sit all day in front of a computer at work, your computer workstation may be the cause of your nagging neck and shoulder pain.

And not surprising, said Dr. Vincent Fortanasce, a rehab specialist and author of *End Back & Neck Pain*, "The setup of your computer workstation can play a large factor in your ability to stay symptom free." He and his coauthors point out 3 common workstation mistakes people make that lead to pain.

Overreaching injuries occur because items on your desktop such as your keyboard or mouse, phone, documents, and other desk items are not on the same level surface. So you reach to grab that stapler or strain to pick up files.

The solution: rearrange the desktop, adjust your chair, put the keyboard and mouse on the same surface, put things you use the most closest to you.

Use of incorrect heights refers to the up and down motions

Swim or Sink



Some people still teach kids to swim by throwing them in the water to see if they sink or swim.

"All they are doing is teaching their children how to be terrified of the water," said Rita Goldberg, a former international swimmer and author of the children's book *I Love to Swim* (www.ilovetoswimthebook.com).

"No child, and I mean no child, has to ever drown in a swimming pool again if they are taught how to survive in the water the right way and at the earliest possible age," she said. Children need to be given the tools for survival and draw their confidence in the water from that knowledge.

"We want kids to respect the water, not fear it," Goldberg said in offering these tips for teaching kids to swim:

- **Start young.** The best age to teach a child to swim is between the ages of 6 and 12 months. Just as parents are learning this is a good time to teach children how to read, they are beginning to understand this is a time when children are able to absorb information like sponges. Teaching them to swim at this early age is a great way to make swimming second nature.
- **Float to survive.** Focus on giving your children the best lifesaving tool you could offer—the ability to survive in the water by floating on their backs. This skill enables all swimmers to rest, breathe, and call for help.
- **Make it gentle and fun.** Swimming will come more naturally to children who are taught gently, without trauma, and with a sense of fun. You cannot teach a 2-year-old not to go near the swimming pool. You cannot teach them that the pool is dangerous. Parents see the swimming pool as a potential death trap for their kids, but all kids see is a big, wet playground. You're not going to change their opinion, so stop trying. Focus on calm, gentle fun, and your kids will take to their lessons like fish to water.

Quick Quote: Summer afternoon — summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language. ~Henry James

and placement of items. Incorrect height occurs as a result of the positioning of the chair, including the armrests, seat back, seat pan, desktop where work is placed, monitor, and the surface holding the keyboard and mouse. Incorrect height may also refer to furniture and features of the work area that are not adjustable.

The solution: a proper chair is of critical importance. Can you adjust it? Do you have to reach above your head to get items in shelves above your desk? Is the top line of the text displayed on your monitor at eye level?

Unbalanced work area refers to twisting motion you do to reach items. If you're right handed, and you use your right hand for all desktop activities such as answering the phone, you may have pain on your right side. Do you twist to see your monitor?

The solution: Place your monitor right in front of you. Are items you use directly ahead of you?

Back, neck, and arm pain are often the result of repeated actions, over and over, over time. Assess what's causing your pain and adjust your workstation.

Best, Healthiest Foods

You can incorporate healthier foods in your diet. Start with just one food item from this list of blockbusters packed with solid nutrition and backed by scientific evidence. Then add more to your diet.

Whole Grains

1. Barley: 11 clinical trials spanning almost 20 years found that increased consumption of barley products can lower total and LDL cholesterol.
2. Quinoa and buckwheat: Research suggest that seeds and sprouts from both quinoa and buckwheat represent rich sources of polyphenol compounds for enhancing the nutrition value of foods such as gluten-free breads.
3. Brown rice: Substitution of brown rice for white rice may lower the risk of type 2 diabetes.
4. Rye: Rye is suggested to improve glycemic profiles, and rye bread can be used to decrease hunger both before and after lunch when consumed at breakfast.

Nuts

5. Almonds: A 2007 study showed that 300 calories of almonds (sufficient to produce beneficial effects on cardiovascular risk factors) per day may be included in the diet with limited risk of weight gain. The study found that the fiber in the almonds blocked some of the fat calories from being absorbed.
6. Hazelnuts: Research shows that it is best to consume hazelnuts whole because many of its antioxidants are located in the hazelnut skin.
7. Pecans: A recent 2010 study suggested that the vitamin E in pecans may provide neurological protection by delaying progression

of motor neuron degeneration.

8. Pistachios: Pistachios are suggested to have anti-inflammatory properties according to a recent study.
9. Walnuts: A walnut-enriched diet may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in those with type 2 diabetes.

Fruits and Vegetables

10. Black raspberries: A 2010 study found black raspberries were highly effective in preventing intestinal tumor development in mice.
11. Blueberries: Whole blueberry smoothies consumed daily improved insulin sensitivity in obese, non-diabetic, and insulin-resistant patients in a 6-week study.
12. Broccoli and cauliflower: A high intake of broccoli and cauliflower may be associated with reduced risk of aggressive prostate cancer.
13. Pomegranates: A preliminary study suggested that pomegranate juice can help prevent a number of complications in kidney disease for patients on dialysis.
14. Tomatoes: A 6-week study found that people with high-blood pressure who consumed 2 servings of canned tomato products daily experienced a significant decrease in blood pressure.

Source: This list was compiled by the nonprofit scientific society, *Institute of Food Technologists*.



Simple Math

A calorie is the amount of energy stored in food, says the *NIH News in Health*. When you eat more calories than your body can use, you store that extra energy, mostly as fat, and gain weight.



7 Tricks To Organize Your Office Right Now

1. Clean off your desktop to allow yourself adequate work space. Remove personal items to a bookshelf or wall. Consider moving your computer to a desk or cart.
2. Set up a system to sort incoming paper (a file box or folders) labeled "to do," "urgent," "refer," "consider," "pay," and "file."
3. Keep a shredder and recycling bin nearby. As you go through your inbox, shred, recycle, and sort into your system.
4. Throw everything you need to read into a box. Grab a few articles to take with you whenever you leave your office.
5. Use cutlery holders or small plastic containers to sort office supply items in a drawer. Keep only enough for a week or two. Place backups in a storage cabinet.
6. Use tubs or tote bags as project files.
7. Make a list of your files and post it on your filing cabinet for quicker retrieval of files. Analyze and consolidate items on your list before organizing the actual files.

Source: *Ineedmoretime.com*

It's Just A Beer

But alcohol is alcohol no matter how you drink it. And you can get a high blood alcohol level (okay, drunk) if you don't know what or how much you're drinking.

According to Dr. Vivian B. Faden, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Office of Science Policy and Communications, "Drinking to get drunk is fairly common among adolescents and young adults."

A standard "drink" contains about .50 ounces of alcohol. This drink could be 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces (a shot) of 80 proof spirits. *It's all the same alcohol content to your body.*

Certain mixed drinks and high-alcohol beers and wines can contain as much alcohol as 2 or more standard drinks. In addition, drinking very quickly or on an empty stomach can contribute to high blood alcohol levels.



Let's Go To The Tape

Richard Drew of the 3M Company was working on another problem when he ended up inventing one of the world's most practical items. He noted that workers painting two-tone cars were having trouble keeping the colors separated along a straight line, so he developed an easy-to-peel, glue-backed masking tape to ease the job. That was in 1925. Then Drew expanded the use of the tape by introducing a transparent, cellophane backing. The result was Scotch Tape, according to the US Census Bureau.



Summer Means Picnics—and Food Allergies

Ants, bees, and rain aren't the only things that can put a damper on a picnic. For more than 12 million Americans, food allergies can ruin the fun too, by causing problems ranging from the mild (itchy bumps and stomach aches) to the severe and life-threatening (swelling of the throat and difficulty breathing).

Experts from the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology offer the following advice for keeping food allergies off the menu:

- **Consider condiment packs.** Use single-size packets of ketchup, mustard, relish, and mayonnaise to prevent cross-contamination that can occur when sharing large containers.
- **Provide a serving utensil for each food item.** And be sure you have enough plates, cups, napkins, and utensils so no one will have to share.
- **Serve allergic guests first.** Grill foods for guests with allergies first, or cook the items on a fresh piece of aluminum foil. Also, allow guests with allergies to dig into the food first, before cross-contamination can occur.
- **Remember the wipes.** For get-togethers in forest preserves and other outdoor areas, soap and water might be tough to come by, so come prepared with disinfecting wipes and antibacterial gel. Cleaning hands and faces after eating helps reduce the likelihood of allergy-causing food particles being passed during play.
- **Check cell phone coverage.** If your picnic is away from home, be sure you can get a cell phone signal in the area to call 911 if someone has a severe allergic reaction.

The Point About Acupuncture

You've heard about this ancient Chinese medicine practice. But you wonder if it will work.

The answer, from the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, is sometimes.

Acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points on the body, most often with the insertion of thin metal needles through the skin. At least 3 million Americans use acupuncture every year.

Recent studies have found that acupuncture can be effective for certain health problems, such as some types of chronic pain. But how it works is a mystery.

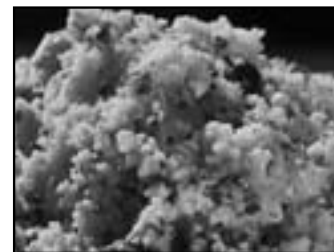
If you'd like to try it, know this, from the National Institutes of Health:

- Talk to your doctor about it, especially if you are pregnant or nursing or are thinking of using acupuncture to treat a child.
- Find an acupuncturist who is experienced working with your problem.
- Check credentials. Most states require a license to practice acupuncture.
- Don't use acupuncture instead of conventional medical care.
- Don't rely on a diagnosis of disease by an acupuncturist who doesn't have conventional medical training.
- Tell your doctor about any alternative or complementary medicine practices you use.



FEATURED RECIPE:

Couscous Salad



Curious about couscous? Craving something light and refreshing for dinner? This salad will satisfy you as much as any pasta dish or burger. The recipe is packed with delicious, colorful vegetables and lots of fiber.

- 1 pkg (10-12 oz.) couscous, whole wheat, if available
- 2 to 3 cups fat-free, reduced sodium chicken broth
- 1 Tablespoon canola oil
- 1 medium zucchini, diced
- 1/2 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1/2 yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons dried basil (or slivered fresh basil)
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Prepare the couscous according to the package instructions, using broth in place of water. Let it cool. Meanwhile, heat the canola oil in a skillet over medium heat until it is hot. Add the zucchini, peppers, dried tomatoes, garlic, and basil, and sauté until lightly browned, about 4 minutes.

Place the couscous in a large bowl. Mix in the sautéed vegetables. Toss with olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature. Place the mixed salad on a serving plate. Garnish with sliced tomatoes and asparagus spears.

Makes 7 cups. Per 1 cup serving: 267 calories, 8 g total fat (1 g saturated fat), 40 g carbohydrate, 7 g protein, 4 g dietary fiber, 173 mg sodium.

From the American Institute for Cancer Research, www.aicr.org.

Doing Good

Do you volunteer to help others? If you do, thank you. And your body will thank you too.

The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that studies show strong health benefits for those who help others. Specifically volunteers were found to live longer, maintain their health, have lower rates of depression, and less heart disease.

Volunteering is particularly helpful to the health of older adults and those who volunteer 100 hours each year (that's just 2 hours a week).

Want to get started? Look for a volunteer activity that strikes a chord with you personally. Also in searching for the "right" volunteer activity, ask these questions:

- How much time do I have to commit?
- What talents or skills do I offer?
- What do I want to get out of my involvement?
- Will I enjoy this type of service?

To help find volunteer activities in your area, visit these websites: www.handsonnetwork.org, www.Serve.gov, and www.volunteermatch.org.

